

CAIN AND ABEL

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The following study of Cain and Abel is from the Way of Life Advanced Bible Studies course on "Genesis, which is available from Way of Life Literature. See the online catalog at the web site.

ABEL'S OFFERING

"And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering" (Genesis 4:1-4).

Observe the characteristics of Abel's offering:

1. *Abel offered in accordance with God's Word.* Abel listened carefully to God and did what God said. He did not attempt to modify God's plan by his own thinking. He was the father of all who believe that God's Word is the sole authority for faith and practice. He understood that there is only one way to God and those who follow false religions will not be accepted.

Abel himself was a prophet and received revelation from God (Lk. 11:50-51). Abel also heard God's word from Adam and Eve. They would have told him of the Messianic prophecy they had received in Genesis 3:15 and of how God clothed them in the skins of animals to cover their nakedness.

This reminds us of how much revelation men had even before the founding of the nation Israel and the giving of the Law of Moses.

* Adam lived 930 years and lived concurrently for 243 years with his grandson Methuselah who died the year of the Flood and whose life overlapped that of Noah. Thus the revelation that Adam and Eve had from the Garden of Eden was available "from the horses' mouth" for almost a full millennium and was available from those who knew Adam personally for another millennium. Noah and his sons could have known a man who knew Adam.

* The second son born to Adam and Eve was a prophet (Lk. 11:50-51) and offered sacrifices by faith in God's Word (Heb. 11:4).

* Enoch was a prophet and prophesied of the second coming of Christ (Jude 14-15); his rapture to Heaven was also a testimony to men (Heb. 11:5).

* Job was a prophet and understand the bodily resurrection (Job 19:23-27) and many other great truths. Job lived after the flood and prior to Moses.

* Noah was a preacher of righteousness and a testimony to his generation for 120 years while he was building the Ark (2 Pet. 2:5).

2. *Abel's offering spoke of man's sinful condition.* Abel acknowledged his personal guilt and unworthiness by bringing a sacrifice that depicted One suffering in his place. He did not pretend that he was righteous or that God would accept his works. Abel acknowledged that man's sin is a serious matter before God which can only be cleansed by the blood and death of Jesus Christ.

3. *Abel's offering spoke of the necessity of blood and death.* Abel's offering signified Christ's atonement (Heb 12:24). Abel acknowledged that without death (Rom. 6:23) *and* the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (Heb. 9:22). A bloodless religion is a false religion.

4. *Abel's offering spoke the necessity of substitution.* True salvation is a matter of substitution. Christ took the sinner's punishment; the believing sinner takes his righteousness (Isa. 53:1-12; 2 Cor. 5:21).

5. *Abel's offering spoke of faith rather than works* (Heb. 11:4). Abel was saved because of his faith. True salvation has always been through faith without works (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:3-7; Tit. 3:5).

6. *Abel's offering spoke of repentance.* By the very act of offering the sacrifice that God had demanded, Abel demonstrated his repentance from sin and false religion and dead works. Jesus taught us that there is no salvation apart from repentance (Luke 13:3, 5).

CAIN'S OFFERING

In contrast to Abel, Cain brought unto God the fruit and vegetables that he had grown in his garden. Cain is the father of human religion.

WHAT WERE THE MARKS OF CAIN'S RELIGION?

1. Cain's was a religion *composed of self works*.

Cain offering the product of his own labor. He was denying his fallen condition, believing that God would accept him as he was. Cain is the father of all who deny that man is wicked and undone before God, the father of all who think there is "a spark of goodness in all men," who believe in the universal fatherhood of God, who believe that sincerity is sufficient in religion and that as long as a man is sincere God will accept him.

2. Cain's was a religion *devised by his own self will*.

Derived from his own imagination rather than God's Word. God had spoken through Abel, who was a prophet and received revelation from God (Lk. 11:50; 1:70; Acts 3:21), but Cain ignored the Word of God. Cain was the first philosopher and inventor of his own religion.

3. Cain's was a religion that *denied the necessity of a blood sacrifice*.

It was a bloodless religion. He replaced the blood and death of an innocent sacrifice with lovely fresh produce from his own garden. He is the father of all of those who think they can approach God in some way other than through the blood of Christ.

4. Cain's was a religion that *believed there are many ways to God*.

Adam and Eve surely told Cain what God had shown them in the Garden, that the way of salvation was through the death of sacrificial animals (taught to them when God clothed them in coats of skins) and that the Seed of the woman would one day come to die for man's sins and thus destroy the head of the serpent. And Abel had certainly warned Cain that there was only one way to God, but Cain was sure that God was not so narrow-minded. Thus Cain is the father of those who believe that all religions lead to the same God.

WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF CAIN'S RELIGION?

1. Cain was rejected by God (Gen. 4:5). He was rejected because he did not approach God according to revelation and according to the blood sacrifice. Compare Matthew 7:21-23 and Romans 10:1-4.

2. Cain was angry and jealous of those who followed God's way (Gen. 4:4-5). Cain was angry because of Abel's obedience and God's blessing upon him. Abel had done nothing against Cain; he had no just reason to be angry.

3. Cain ignored God's gracious warning (Gen. 4:6-7).

God knew that was happening; He observes everything that man does and thinks (Prov. 15:3).

Notice how patient God was to Cain, in spite of his open defiance to the revelation about the sacrifice. God could have struck Cain down immediately, but He is a loving, longsuffering God.

God speaks to men and calls men. We see this in the Garden when God came and called out to Adam and Eve and we see this throughout man's history. Jesus gives light to every man that enters the world (Jn. 1:9). He draws all men (Jn. 12:32).

Men can say no to God and can reject His salvation. We see this from the beginning to the end of the Bible. This in no way detracts from God's sovereignty, because it is God Himself who gave man his will and who has ordained that salvation be received by faith. Compare Mat. 23:37.

God told Cain that he could do good or evil. It was his choice (v. 7). Men have a free will. It is not the will of man that is in bondage; it is his mind and heart that is darkened (Jer. 17:9; 2 Cor. 4:4). Yet God gives light to every man so that he is without excuse (Jn. 1:9).

God warned Cain that sin would overwhelm and destroy him if he continued to serve it and put off salvation. He said, "and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" (v. 7). God described sin as a vicious beast ready to spring. Sin is an evil taskmaster. Someone has said, "Sin will take you farther than you want to go and keep you longer than you want to stay and exact a price greater than you want to pay." The devil seeketh whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

God is no respecter of men. He would have received Cain had Cain come in the right way and he would have forgiven Cain had he repented. "God hates nothing that he has made, denies his favour to none but those who have forfeited it, and is an enemy to none but those who by sin have made him their enemy: so that if we come short of acceptance with him we must thank ourselves, the fault is wholly our own; if we had done our duty, we should not have missed of his mercy. This will justify God in the destruction of sinners, and will aggravate their ruin; there is not a condemned sinner in hell, but, if he had done well, as he might have done, had been a glorious saint in heaven" (Matthew Henry).

Those who ignore God's conviction and sin against their conscience go from bad to worse. There was a process that led to Cain's act of murder, and it began with his stubborn self will and continued step by step in a downward spiral. Any man is capable of any sin if he ignores his conscience and persists in walking in darkness.

4. Cain refused to listen to his brother (v. 8). Abel was a prophet, but Cain despised the preaching of this first fundamentalist.

5. Cain murdered his brother in a jealous, demonic rage; in an act of religious persecution; he then lied and justified himself (Gen. 4:8; Mat. 23:35; 1 Jn. 3:12).

6. Cain was judged of God (Gen. 4:9-16).

The Lord knew Cain's secret sin and He did not ignore it. He said that Abel's blood cried from the ground (Gen. 4:10). The book of Hebrews contrasts the voice of Abel's blood with the voice of Christ's blood (Heb. 12:24). While Abel's blood cried out for vengeance toward the sinner, Christ's blood cries out for mercy and grace!

God cursed Cain both in this life and in that to come (vv. 11-12). Cain was cursed on the earth and *from* the earth. Eventually he would suffer in eternal hell.

God cast Cain away from His presence (v. 14). This will be the punishment of every unsaved person (2 Thess. 1:9).

God marked Cain so that all who met him would know his sin (v. 15). He was marked with perpetual disgrace. Sins such as murder and adultery always bring perpetual disgrace even when repented of and forgiven.

7. Cain is the father of those who try to live in this world on their own terms apart from God (Gen. 4:16-24). He is the father of the evil “world system.” “Civilization today is Cainite in origin. We still have boasting murderers like Lamech and those that violate the sacred vows of marriage, men still reject divine revelation and trust in their own human resources. The true Christian does not belong to this ‘world system’ that is passing away (1 Jn. 2:15-17)” (Wiersbe).

Cain’s children built the first city (Gen. 4:17). This became the headquarters of his defiance against God and a standard for those who were likeminded.

Where Did Cain get his wife? The answer is in Gen. 5:4. Adam and Eve had many sons and daughters that are not named in Genesis. Cain obviously married one of his sisters. This was not wrong in the early days of the human race, because the gene pool was not weakened as it is today.

His children perverted the divine institution of marriage (Gen. 4:19). The perversion of God’s institutions has resulted in great heartache and moral and spiritual confusion. Other ways the children of Cain have perverted marriage is by adultery and fornication, homosexuality, and no fault divorce.

His children were wicked, proud, and violent but also accomplished (Gen. 4:20-24). “See that worldly things are the only things that carnal wicked people set their hearts upon and are most ingenious and industrious about. So it was with this impious race of cursed Cain. Here were a father of shepherds and a father of musicians, but not a father of the faithful. Here was one to teach in brass and iron, but none to teach the good knowledge of the Lord. Here were devices how to be rich, and how to be mighty, and how to be merry, but nothing of God, nor of his fear and service, among them. Present things fill the heads of most people” (Matthew Henry).

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